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# Mistaken Identity

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# MISTAKEN INDENTITY

By ANNA J. COOPER

An Irishman once spied a Jew sunning himself in the streets of Cork and at once fell to belaboring him with his shillalah.

"But why?" cried the Jew.  
"What have I done?"

"You dog of an unbeliever," shouted the son of Erin between blows, "you crucified my Lord!"

"But leave off," pleaded the Jew, "I never saw your Lord."

"Ah, that's the accursed infidel! the heretic blasphemer! The spalpeen denies the Saviour of the World!"

Much of the race prejudice around us today is as senseless if not as ludicrous, as the misplaced zeal and religious fervor of this inquisitor of the Emerald Isle, and it is by no means confined to one side of the color line.

"Do you expect me to treat as equals these people whom my grandfather held as slaves?"

"Do you expect me to treat with politeness and respect these people who lynch and burn my people and who use the most contemptuous language they can find to insult and degrade us?"

"It is just because of the unreasonableness behind our emotions and the tragic consequences of all bitter emotion, that pulpit and press, teachers and leaders should combine to guide aright and allay by every honorable and sane expedient the hysteria and blatant bitterness of the race question in America today.

Such news as the item mentioned in last week's Tribune, the authenticated fact that an honorable and respected white in one of the high record lynching states of the South quietly and unobtrusively submitted to a transfusion of his blood to save the life of a colored woman, is news, quite as truly as that when a man bites a dog, is news. It is news, too, that ought to open all eyes to the big fact that human association is a matter of individual and group adjustment, and that life



is far too complex and variable to be reducible yet, even by a Freud or a Niebschi, to an algebraic formula.

Not all white people are lynchers at heart; not all colored people are servile tip-seekers. Human behavior cannot be graphed and diagrammed just by the shape of a skull, nor can a column of figures settle what ought to be done with twelve millions rooted in the soil. Race prejudice feeds on cheap talk. It grows and multiplies, it fattens and battens in the hot-beds of agitators and statisticians. We've got to learn to tolerate our neighbor before we can love him. Christianity hasn't failed -- we just haven't got to it. It has never yet been given a chance by any Christian nation. No Christian statesman today dares advocate the principles of Jesus Christ as a guide for a League of Nations.

Democracy, too, is meat admittedly too strong for this generation. Our ideals have jumped way ahead of the procession and are demanding the impossible. Christianity and democracy, as abstractions, are too sublimated for modern thinking to get a grip on them. While they are being interpreted by the theologians and reasoned out by the philosophers, the barbarians of today will have brained the teacher and burned down the school house. If Christian brotherhood is too hard a doctrine we shall have to drop the gauge a peg or too, as the Church of Rome did in dealing with the Barbarians of the Middle Ages. She instituted what was known as the Truce of God, an actual compromise with lawlessness which agreed to leave off atrocities for three days of every week. And so now, if you really cannot love one who does not look like you, the solidarity of your race and the perpetuity of your traditions can hardly require that you slay him. Christ says, love our enemies. You don't and you won't. Well then, tolerate them. The primitive savage at the cannibal stage eats his enemies; a little higher up he enslaves them; not much higher he exploits them and eats their labor; it is quite a step up to be willing to live and let live.

Tolerance, then, I suggest as a first lesson in the lowest form or group D for the "retarded" pupils. Let that be the first round of your ladder. Tolerance of differences, tolerance, too, of similarities—for there is often as much bitter hatred

tions of moment which shall affect our lives for years to come. They may relieve us of some disagreeable conditions, or involve us in war; may reduce our taxes or further curtail our liberties. Because their power is to be exercised in the future, we should exact from them certain promises or pledges that they will not do things that may injure us, or that they will do what benefits us.

Those who are to be elected will shape national policies for the future, and it is childish to fail to see the whole scope of their power. Should Democrats be elected to control Congress, they would have at the hands of the most important committees of Congress, where the legislation is shaped and guided, men from sections of this country who have not shown special interest in the future which we plan for our group or ourselves.

The coming elections may be local, but the results will be national, and meddlers may give us cause to regret hasty action and ill-considered advice.

The wrong ballot dropped in a box in Ohio or Kansas may register its result in Georgia or Mississippi by placing a Congressman from one of those states as chairman of a committee which shall be antagonistic to liberalizing citizenship.

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for those who approximate uncomfortably near our own condition and standard of life as of those whose abject want of all that we hold dear, appeals to our pity and tempers our repulsion. It is not an easy lesson to learn—this of allowing the other fellow to be himself, to live his life, to think the thing through for himself and above all to look the part kind nature created him for and predestined him to represent in her setting up of the great drama—in a word—respect, his personality.

We are told a new Gospel of Tolerance is being preached this week in the great gathering in New York of more than 1,000 Jews, Christians, Moslems, Hindus, Sikhs, a tolerance of religious beliefs as well as of races and colors. Rabbi Israel Goldstein characterizes it as a signal event in the direction of comity and good-will. "Mutual appreciation," says he, "is the culminating virtue of civilized society. The ideal humanity will never be a 'melting-pot,' but a harmonious orchestration."